

REMARKS

Claims 1-26 are currently pending in this application, with claims 14-26 withdrawn. Thus, claims 1-13 are under examination. By this amendment, claims 1 and 12 are amended.

The Office Action of May 9, 2005 rejected all pending claims over U.S. Patent 3,020,427 to Slayter et al (hereinafter "Slayter"). Applicants traverse the rejections, and in light of the following comments, request that the rejections be withdrawn.

Rejection under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b)

The Office Action rejected Claims 1-7 and 11-13 under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) as being anticipated by U.S. Patent 3,050,427 to Slayter et al ("Slayter"). Applicants respectfully traverse this rejection.

Presently amended claim 1 recites the step of and transporting the fiber material to a suction conveyor essentially by a transport air flowing in the fluidized bed the direction of the suction conveyor. The only transport air that is arguably disclosed in Slayter is gravity. Applicants further submit that gravity is a force, and not a transport air. In contrast, transport air of the present invention also flows in a horizontal direction (see, e.g., Fig. 6 of Applicants' specification, reference no. 68) and in a direction opposite of the air flow used to separate the fibers. (see, e.g., Fig. 6, reference no. 133 and 72). In the illustrated Figures, this transport air is in an upward direction. Additionally, the requirement of amended claim 1 that transport air flow in the fluidized bed flows in the direction of suction belt conveyor 89 requires that transport air be moving in a direction opposite that of the air flow 133 in the separating chamber 61. Suction belt conveyor 89 is depicted, for Example, in Figure 12 of the present specification.

In this example, transport air flow flowing in the direction of suction conveyor would be moving in an upwards direction. Nowhere does Slayter disclose transport air in an upward direction.

Amended claim 1 also recites a method for producing a nonwoven fiber composite comprising feeding separated fiber materials to a fluidized bed. Slayter does not disclose a fluidized bed as known to one of ordinary skill in the art, nor does Slater disclose the fluidized bed of the present invention. In describing the fluidized bed according to one embodiment of the present invention, paragraph 29 of Applicants' specification states, "the fluidized bed is curved in the conveying direction of the filter material, such that the fluidized bed initially points downward, then levels off to become horizontal and finally points in an upward direction." Slayter only discloses fibers falling onto a suction box 31. Horizontal movement of the fibers in Slayter occurs via the transfer conveyor, and there is no movement at all of the fibers in an upward direction. Because Slayter lacks this necessary disclosure, Slayter cannot anticipate the fluidized bed of the present invention.

Because Slayter discloses neither the step of feeding separated fiber materials to fluidized bed nor transporting the separated fiber material by a transport air flowing in the fluidized bed in the direction of the suction conveyor, Slayter cannot anticipate the claim 1. Claims 2-7 and 11-13 are allowable because they depend from allowable claim 1, and for their additionally recited features.

Rejection under 35 U.S.C. § 103

The Office Action rejected claims 8-10 under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable

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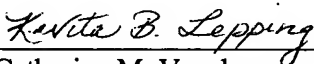
over Slayter. It is believed that in light of the above arguments, claim 1 is allowable, and thus dependent claims 8-10 are also allowable. Withdrawal of this rejection is respectfully requested.

Conclusion

In light of the above amendments and remarks, it is submitted that claims 1-13 are allowable. Withdrawal of the rejections and a Notice of Allowance are respectfully requested.

Respectfully submitted,

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